

U.S. Small Business Administration



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: December 11, 1998

Release Number: 98-107

www.sba.gov/news/

Contact: Janie Dymond (202) 205-6740

SBA News Releases:

ADMINISTRATOR ALVAREZ PROMOTES SMALL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS IN BELFAST

WASHINGTON – U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Aida Alvarez met with Irish small business leaders and Belfast's government officials to explore ways to promote Irish/American small business partnerships and to promote mutual small business growth.

Administrator Alvarez, in Belfast on a visit to promote small business development in general and support for women's business ownership in particular, linked the peace agreement ending years of strife in Northern Ireland to new opportunities for economic development.

"Without peace, there can be no prosperity; without prosperity, there can be no peace," Administrator Alvarez said. "The peace efforts spearheaded in Northern Ireland have helped to create new opportunities for economic confidence and growth here. "

"I am proud to be part of the Clinton Administration, which has worked so hard to help political leaders across this whole island and the communities they represent move forward on the path to democratic reconciliation and peace," she said. "The political environment has never been better, and now we will get down to work on the economic environment."

-more-

Page Two

During her visit to Belfast, Administrator Alvarez discussed the importance of small businesses, and stressed diversity, technology and trade/globalization as priorities for small business development in the new millennium.

Administrator Alvarez also participated in a roundtable discussion in Northern Ireland with women business owners and women community leaders which focused on economic empowerment, networking and small business financing, thus promoting women's involvement in business. The "Vital Voices: Women in Democracy" roundtable discussion, held in Belfast, highlights the role of women in strengthening democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The Belfast conference comes on the heels of the conference First Lady Hillary Clinton attended in Northern Ireland in September. Similar conferences have been held in Vienna, Austria and Montevideo, Uruguay.

"We recognize that our societies are becoming increasingly global," said Administrator Alvarez. "This globalization poses new challenges and offers new opportunities for our countries. It is important that we come together, pool our abilities, share our visions and create opportunities on both sides of the Atlantic."

One of the highlights of the conference was a demonstration of the SBA's Online Women's Business Center. Launched in January 1998, the Online Women's Business Center is a training-and-counseling website that offers virtually everything a woman needs to start and build a successful business.

- more -

Page Three

The site, which can be found at **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, includes a full business-training curriculum, mentoring, individual counseling, topic forums and newsgroups, market research, information on all of the SBA's programs and services, and a comprehensive new state-by-state Resource Guide, plus links to countless other sites and resources. Women all over the world have visited the site, and Administrator Alvarez explored ways to increase access to such information for women in Belfast.

While in Belfast Administrator Alvarez met with Paul Murphy, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Helen Jackson, Member of Parliament representing Northern Ireland, Secretary of State Marjorie Mowlam, and attended a luncheon hosted by David Alderdice, Lord Mayor of Belfast.

Administrator Alvarez and other SBA experts also participated in a workshop in Belfast on venture capital, finance, and lending with banking, business, and political leaders.

###